



Carolyn of the Corners

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CHAPTER V.

A Tragic Situation.

Such was the introduction of Carolyn May to The Corners. It was not a very exciting life she had entered into, but the following two or three weeks were very full.

Aunt Rose insisted upon her being properly fitted out with clothing for the summer and fall. Carolyn May had to go to the dressmaker's house to be fitted and that is how she became acquainted with Chet Gormley's mother.

Mrs. Gormley was helping the dressmaker and they both made much of Carolyn May. Aunt Rose allowed her to go for her fitting alone—of course with Prince as a companion—so, without doubt, Mrs. Gormley, who loved a "dish of gossip," talked more freely with the little girl than she would have done in Mrs. Kennedy's presence.

One afternoon the little girl appeared at the dressmaker's with Prince's collar decorated with short, curly shavings.

"I take it you've stopped at Jed Parlow's shop, child," said Mrs. Gormley with a sigh.

"Yes, ma'am," returned Carolyn May. "Do you know, he's very lib'ral."

"Lib'ral?" repeated Mrs. Gormley. "I never heard of old Jed Parlow being accused of that before. Did you, Mrs. Maine?"

Mrs. Maine was the dressmaker; and she bit off her words when she spoke, much as she bit off her threads.

"No, I never—heard Jed Parlow—called that—no!" declared Mrs. Maine emphatically.

"Why, yes," little Carolyn May said quite eagerly, "he gives me all the shavings I want. I—I guess folks don't just understand about Mr. Parlow," she added, remembering what her uncle had first said about the carpenter. "He is real lib'ral."

"It's a wonder to me," drawled Mrs. Gormley, "that he has a thing to do with a certain party. Mrs. Maine, considering how his daughter feels toward that certain party's relation. What do you think?"

"I guess—there's sumpin'—to be said—on both sides o' that controversy," responded the dressmaker.

"Mendin' that mebbe a certain party's relative feels just as cross as Mandy Parlow?" suggested Mrs. Gormley.

"Yep," agreed the other woman. Carolyn May listened, much puzzled. She wondered just who "a certain party" could be.

Mrs. Maine was called away upon some household task and Mrs. Gormley seemed to change the subject of conversation.

"Don't your uncle, Mr. Stagg, ever speak to you about Mandy Parlow?" she asked the little girl.

Carolyn May had to think about this before answering. Then she remembered.

"Oh, yes," she said brightly. "He does? Do tell!" exclaimed Mrs. Gormley eagerly. "What does he say?"

"Why, he says her name is Miss Amanda Parlow."

Mrs. Gormley flushed rather oddly and glanced at the child with suspicion. But little Carolyn May was perfectly frank and ingenuous.

"Humph!" ejaculated Chet's mother. "He never says nothing about bein' in love with Mandy, does he? They was goin' with each other steady once."

The little girl looked puzzled. "When folks love each other they look at each other and talk to each other, don't they?" she asked.

"Well—yes—generally," admitted Mrs. Gormley.

"Then my Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda Parlow aren't in love," announced Carolyn May with confidence, "for they don't even look at each other."

"They used to. Why, Joseph Stagg and Mandy Parlow was sweethearts years and years ago! Long before your mother left these parts, child."

"That was a long time 'fore I was borned," said the little girl wonderingly.

knowing way. "One day," she said, growing confidential, "it was in camp-meeting time—one day somebody seen Joe Stagg drivin' out with another girl—Charlotte Lenny, that was. She was married to a man over in Springdale long ago. Mr. Stagg took Charlotte to Faith camp meeting."

"Then, the very next week, Mandy went with Evan Peckham to a barn dance at Crockett's, and nobody ain't ever seen your uncle and Mandy Parlow speak since, much less ever walk together."

One particularly muddy day Prince met the returning hardware merchant at the gate with vociferous barking and a plain desire to implant a welcoming tongue on the man's cheek. He succeeded in muddying Mr. Stagg's suit with his front paws, and almost cast the angry man full length into a mud puddle.

"Drat the beast!" ejaculated Mr. Stagg. "I'd rather have an epileptic fit loose around here than him. Now, look at these clo'es! I declare, Carolyn, you've just got to tie that mongrel up—and keep him tied!"

"All the time, Uncle Joe?" whispered the little girl.

"Yes, ma'am, all the time! If I find him loose again, I'll tie a bag of rocks to his neck and drop him in the deepest hole in the brook."

After this awful threat Prince lived a precarious existence, and his mistress was much worried for him. Aunt Rose said nothing, but she saw that both the little girl and her canine friend were very unhappy.

Mrs. Kennedy, however, had watched Mr. Joseph Stagg for years. Indeed, she had known him as a boy, long before she had closed up her own little cottage around on the other road and come to the Stagg place to save the hardware merchant from the continued reign of those "trifling creatures" of whom Mrs. Gormley had spoken.

As a bachelor Joseph Stagg had been preyed upon by certain female harpies so prevalent in a country community. Some had families whom they partly supported out of Mr. Stagg's hard-earned; some were widows who looked upon the well-to-do merchant as a marrying proposition.

Aunt Rose Kennedy did not need the position of Mr. Stagg's housekeeper and could not be accused of assuming it from mercenary motives. Over her back fence she had seen the havoc going on in the Stagg homestead after Hannah Stagg went to the city and Joseph Stagg's final female relative had died and left him alone in the big house.

One day the old Quaker-like woman could stand no more. She put on her sunbonnet, came around by the road to the front door of the Stagg house, which she found open, and walked through to the rear porch on which the woman who then held the situation of housekeeper was wrapping up the best feather bed and pillows in a pair of the best homespun sheets, preparatory to their removal.

The neighbors enjoyed what followed. Aunt Rose came through the ordeal as dignified and unruffled as ever; the retiring incumbent went away wrathfully, shaking the dust of the premises from her garments as a testimony against "any such actions."

When Mr. Stagg came home at supper time he found Aunt Rose at the helm and already a different air about the place.

"Goodness me, Aunt Rose," he said, biting into her biscuit ravenously. "I was a-going down to the mill-hands' hotel to board. I couldn't stand it no longer. If you'd stay here and do for me, I'd feel like a new man."

"You ought to be made over into a new man, Joseph Stagg," the woman said sternly. "A married man."

"No, no! Never that!" gasped the hardware dealer.

"If I came here, Joseph Stagg, it would cost you more money than you've been paying these non-account women."

"I don't care," said Mr. Stagg recklessly. "Go ahead. Do what you please. Say what you want. I'm game."

Thereby he had put himself into Aunt Rose's power. She had renovated the old kitchen and some of the other rooms. If Mr. Stagg at first trembled for his bank balance, he was made so comfortable that he had not the heart to murmur.

Of course, Carolyn May let Prince run at large when she was sure Uncle Joe was well out of sight of the house, but she was very careful to chain him up again long before her uncle was expected to return.

Prince had learned not to chase anything that wore feathers; Aunt Rose herself had to admit that he was a very intelligent dog and knew what punishment was for. But how did he know that in trying to dig out a mole he would be doing more harm than good?

The mole in question lived under a piece of rock wall near the garden

fence. When Uncle Joe came home to dinner on one particular Saturday he walked down to the corner of the garden fence, and there saw the havoc Prince had wrought. In following the line of the mole's last tunnel he had worked his way under the picket fence and had torn up two currant bushes and done some damage in the strawberry patch.

"And the worst of it is," grumbled the hardware dealer, "he never caught the mole. That mongrel really isn't worth a bag of dornicks to sink him in the brook. But that's what he's going to get this very evening when I come home. I won't stand for him a day longer."

Carolyn May positively turned pale as she crouched beside the now chained-up Prince, both arms about his rough neck. He licked her cheek. Fortunately, he could not understand everything that was said to him, therefore the pronunciation of this terrible sentence did not agitate him an atom.

Carolyn May sat for a long time under the tree beside the sleeping dog and thought how different this life at The Corners was from that she had lived with her father and mother in the city home.

If only that big ship, the Dunraven, had not sailed away with her papa and her mamma!

Carolyn May had been very brave on that occasion. She had gone ashore with Mrs. Price and Edna after her mother's last clinging embrace and her father's husky "Good-by, daughter," with scarcely a tear.

Of course she had been brave! Mamma would return in a few weeks, and then, after a time, papa would likewise come back—and oh! so rosy and stout!

And then, in two weeks, came the fatal news of the sinking of the Dunraven and the loss of all but a small part of her crew and passengers.

Vaguely these facts had become known to Carolyn May. She never spoke of them. They did not seem real to the little girl.

But now, sitting beside the condemned Prince—her companion and



The Little Girl Felt Bitterly Her Loneliness and Grief.

only real comforter during these weeks of her orphanhood—the little girl felt bitterly her loneliness and grief.

If Uncle Joe did as he had threatened, what should she do? There seemed to be no place for her and Prince to run away to.

"I'm quite sure I don't want to live," thought Carolyn May dismally. "If papa and mamma and Prince are all dead—why! there aren't enough other folks left in the world to make it worth while living in. I don't believe. If Prince isn't going to be alive, then I don't want to be alive, either."

By and by Prince began to get very uneasy. It was long past his dinner hour, and every time he heard the screen door slam he jumped up and gazed eagerly and with cocked ears and wagging tail in that direction.

"You poor thing, you," said Carolyn May at last. "I s'pose you are hungry. It isn't going to do you a bit of good to eat; but you don't know it. I'll ask Aunt Rose if she has something for you."

She got up wearily and went across the yard. Aunt Rose stood just inside the screen door.

"Don't you want any dinner, Carolyn May?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. I guess I'd better not eat," said the child.

"Why not?"

"Cause my stomach's so trembly. I just know I couldn't keep anything down, even if I could swallow it. But Prince'll eat his, please. He—he don't know any better."

"Tut, tut!" murmured the woman. "He's the most sensible of the two of you, I declare."

The minutes of that afternoon dragged by in most doleful procession. There was no idea in the little girl's mind that Uncle Joe might change his intention and Prince be saved from the watery grave promised him. When she saw the hardware dealer come in to the yard almost an hour earlier than their usual supper time she was not surprised. Nor did she think of pleading with him for the dog's life.

The little girl watched him askance. Mr. Stagg came directly through the yard, stopping only at the shed for a moment. There he secured a strong potato sack, and with it trailing from his hand went half-way up the knoll to where there was a heap of stones. He stooped down and began to select some of these, putting them in the

bag. This was too much for Carolyn May. With a fearful look at Uncle Joe's uncompromising shoulders, she went to the tree where Prince was chained. Exchanging the chain for the leather leash with which she always led him about, the little girl guided the mongrel across the yard and around the corner of the house.

Her last backward glance assured her that the hardware dealer had not observed her. Quickly and silently she led Prince to the front gate, and they went out together into the dusty road.

"I—I know we oughtn't to," whispered Carolyn May to her canine friend, "but I feel I've just got to save you, Prince. I—I can't see you drowned—dead like that!"

She turned the nearest corner and went up the road towards the little closed, gable-roofed cottage where Aunt Rose had lived before she had come to be Uncle Joe's housekeeper.

Carolyn May had already peered over into the small yard of the cottage and had seen that Mrs. Kennedy still kept the flower-beds weeded and the walks neat and the grass plot trimmed. But the window shutters were barred and the front door built up with boards.

Carolyn May went in through the front gate and sat down on the doorstep, while Prince dropped to a comfortable attitude beside her. The dog slept. The little girl ruminated.

She would not go back to Uncle Joe's—no, indeed! She did not know just what she would do when dark should come, but Prince should not be sacrificed to her uncle's wrath.

A voice, low, sweet, yet startling, aroused her.

"What are you doing there, little girl?"

Both runaways started, but neither of them was disturbed by the appearance of her who had accosted Carolyn May.

"Oh, Miss Mandy!" breathed the little girl, and thought that the carpenter's daughter had never looked so pretty.

"What are you doing there?" repeated Miss Parlow.

"We—we've run away," said Carolyn May at last. She could be nothing but frank; it was her nature.

"Run away!" repeated the pretty woman. "You don't mean that?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have. And Prince. From Uncle Joe and Aunt Rose." Carolyn May assured her, nodding her head with each declaration.

"Oh, my dear, what for?" asked Miss Amanda.

So Carolyn May told her—and with tears.

Meanwhile the woman came into the yard and sat beside the child on the step. With her arm about the little girl, Miss Amanda snuggled her up close, wiping the tears away with her own handkerchief.

"I just can't have poor Prince drowned," Carolyn May sobbed. "I'd want to be drowned myself, too."

"I know, dear. But do you really believe your Uncle Joseph would do such a thing? Would he drown your dog?"

"I—I saw him putting the stones in the bag," sobbed Carolyn May. "And he said he would."

"But he said it when he was angry, dear. We often say things when we are angry—more's the pity!—which we do not mean, and for which we are bitterly sorry afterwards. I am sure, Carolyn May, that your Uncle Joe has no intention of drowning your dog."

"Oh, Miss Amanda! Are you positive?"

"Positive! I know Joseph Stagg. He was never yet cruel to any dumb creature. Go ask him yourself, Carolyn May."

With Her Arms About the Little Girl, Miss Amanda Snuggled Her Up Close.

lyn May. Whatever else he may be, he is not a hater of helpless and dumb animals."

"Miss Amanda," cried Carolyn May, with clasped hands, "you—you are just lifting an awful big lump off my heart! I'll run and ask him right away."

She raced with the barking Prince back to the Stagg premises. Mr. Stagg had just finished filling in with the stones the trench Prince had dug under the garden fence.

"There," he grunted. "That dratted dog won't dig this hole any bigger. I reckon. What's the matter with you, Carolyn?"

"Are—are you going to drown'd Princey, Uncle Joe? If—if you do, it just seems to me, I—I shall die!"

He looked up at her searchingly. "Humph! is that mongrel so all-important to your happiness that you want to die if he does?" demanded the man.

judged. "The man with his honest heart that he had been My, sobbing. "I believe you think more of that dog than you do of me." "Humph!" ejaculated the hardware dealer again. "I believe you think more of that dog than you do of me." (To be continued)

Fancies of Children.

The Spectator speaks of that "region into which the 'grownup' has no right of entry, and no key to turn the lock," the mind of the child, and then gives some instantaneous flashes of the child point of view, a point of view disconcertingly aloof and apart from that of "grownups." A child, on a torpedoed ship, when everyone was anxiously hoping that it would keep afloat, was heard to say, in a weary voice: "Oh, when will the ship go down?" A small boy who was being shown the bust of his grandfather, mounted on a little circular stand, asked his mother whether his grandfather had been a very wise man, and then added: "But was that all there was of him?" Perhaps the capping story is that of another little boy who, when told to make no remark on a guest's absent foot, exclaimed: "Oh, no, and when I get to heaven I will say nothing to John the Baptist about his head."

OBJECTORS. The proposal to send conscientious objectors to the farms as laborers has not yet received the hearty endorsement of the farmers. The conscience that demands secure aloofness when thousands are making the supreme sacrifice is likely to be capricious even about farm work. It might object to spraying potato bugs and destroying chicken-lice. Farmers have no more time these days to argue with their help than colonels with their regiments. In Europe they have partly solved the problem by putting conscientious objectors to work on mine sweepers. Here they perform important service for the express purpose of saving life, and never face the obligation of destroying even a potato bug. The objectors still object, but with less logic, if any, than before.

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